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"It is a demon!" muttered Pablo, as, with eyes fixed with terror, he gazed upon the awful form.

THE WINGED WHALE; OR, THE MYSTERY OF RED RUPERT.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
Author of "Scarlet Hand," "Heart of Fire," "Wolf Demon," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE WATER DEMON.

The stars twinkled brightly in the dark sky, and were reflected back in little ripples of shining light as they gleamed on the somber waters of Pensacola Bay.

It was about nine of the night in the year 1814.

A little fishing sloop, containing three fishermen, had just rounded the southern point of Santa Rosa Island and was beating up the bay toward the city of Pensacola.

One of the fishermen, a little wiry fellow, known as Pablo Domingo, was stretched out at full length in the bow of the "smack," keeping a sharp look-out ahead. The second man was crouched down in the center of the boat, while the third was at the helm.

"Keep her a little to the southward, Gomez!" cried the fisherman in the bow to the brawny fellow whose strong hand was on the tiller.

"Ay, ay," he responded.

"Pablo, what story was that that Diego was telling you on the beach just before we set sail this morning?" asked the man in the center of the boat, who was called Jose.

"You have sharp ears, Jose," said Pablo.

"Well, from his manner I guessed that he was telling of something worth hearing, and so I listened," replied Jose, honestly.

"And what did you hear?"

"Something about some terrible fright that he had got in the bay."

"Bah!" cried Gomez, with a look of contempt upon his face, "Diego is a coward; why, his own shadow in the moonbeams would cause him to take to his heels."

"He has seen more than a shadow if he speaks the truth," said Pablo, gravely.

"Well, what has he seen? Come, the story!" cried Gomez, impatiently.

"Hast thou never heard the story of the specter that is said to haunt this bay?" asked Pablo, mysteriously.

"What, the spirit of the Indian chief who was killed near yonder headland?" and Gomez pointed to the north as he spoke.

"Yes."

"And has Diego seen the specter?"

"He can not tell exactly what he saw," replied Pablo; "but I'll tell you what he told me. He had left the town in the morning and ran outside of the island to the fishing-ground, as we have done to-day. Night had set in when he hoisted sail for home. The breeze was light, and when he reached yonder headland—he had run close in to the shore to avoid the set of the tide that was on the ebb—he fancied he saw a light twinkling up the little inlet; one the behind yon headland, that is called Bayou Achee.

Curious to learn the reason of the light being there, he turned the prow of his boat toward the inlet. You know the mouth of it is very narrow and fringed with tall timber, although, beyond it widens into quite a bay and winds some ten or fifteen miles inland."

"Yes, yes!" cried his companions, who were listening eagerly.

"The night was very dark; Diego could hardly see a boat's length before him. As he entered the narrow passage that leads to the bayou, the dense gloom of the tree-shadows made it seem as if he was sailing on a sea of ink. The breeze died away.

Before, behind, and all around him was darkness. Eagerly he looked; the glimmering light had disappeared. Believing that his eyes had deceived him, he put his helm up to return to the bay. As he slowly forged around—for the breeze was so light that it hardly stirred the sail—a strange circle of bluish light danced upon the water within the gloom of the bayou. In the center of the light appeared the outline of a horrible form. Exactly what it was like Diego could not say; for hardly had his eyes rested upon it when a sudden, fitful gust of wind filled his sail, and he glided through the dark passage into the waters of the bay. When he again looked toward the bayou the light had disappeared; he saw nothing but darkness."

"A wonderful story," said Jose, after a moment's silence.

"All a lie!" cried Gomez, quickly; "a

more arrant coward than Diego never existed. I'll bet a bottle of the best wine in yonder town that he saw neither light nor demon form—that he never was within the shadows of yonder inlet!"

"Tush, Gomez!" exclaimed Pablo; "be reasonable. Why should he lie about the matter?"

"So that he may persuade good men that his blood has some fire in it. I'll wager that if we sail into yon dark passage, no mystic light will stop our way."

Jose made the sign of the cross in fright.

"The saints protect us, Gomez! what

should put such a thought into your head? Would you brave the power of the Evil One?"

"I'm a good Catholic, and I do not fear

Satan himself!" replied Gomez, stoutly.

"So, comrades, if your hearts are as firm as mine, I'll turn the bow of our boat toward Bayou Achee, and we'll see if we can not make something out of this mysterious light and demon form."

"Suppose that the specter should draw our boat into some terrible whirlpool?" suggested Jose.

"I fear not; what have we done that we

should come to harm?" demanded Gomez.

"I, for one, fear not," said Pablo.

"Good!" exclaimed Gomez; "shall we go then?"

"But the specter—"

"Jose, thou art as big a coward as Diego!" cried Gomez, impatiently.

"We will see no specter. 'Twas a will-o'-the-wisp

dancing in the shadows of the trees that dizzied Diego's eyes. Come, shall we for the inlet?"

"Hold your course as you will, but if the

specter sinks our boat, remember that I

sawed you," said Jose, who had no

stomach for the adventure.

With a turn of his wrist, Gomez put the

helm up, and the little craft, obedient to her

master's will, bore toward the inlet.

"We'll get out the sweeps as we pass the

headland, for the wind is from the shore,

and we'll need them. We can pull in slowly, and if we discover any thing suspicious, why, we can return," Gomez said.

"Diego swore that he spoke naught but the truth," Pablo observed.

"It may be that there are some Indians

encamped on the shores of the bayou," Gomez remarked.

"If we are to encounter

mortals, I fear not. My musket here," and he touched it with his foot as he spoke—it

was in the bottom of the boat—"will pro

tect us. It is loaded with a good ou

ce of men's silence.

"All a lie!" cried Gomez, quickly; "a

"But, if it is the specter of the Indian chief?"

"Then a good round prayer or two will scare him off," Gomez replied.

Quickly the light boat cut her way through the sullen waters.

The night was very dark; the moon had not yet risen and the stars alone shed their rays on sea and land.

Closer and closer came the boat to the dark headland, crowned with cypress trees, that, like a storm-beaten castle, guarded the entrance to Bayou Achee.

The fishermen passed from the open waters of the bay into the narrow channel that led to the land-locked bay.

The shadows of the trees fell thick and heavy around the little boat that danced so lightly upon the surface of the tide.

No sound broke the funeral silence of the night except the idle flapping of the sails against the mast.

Within the sheltered inlet the boat no longer glided swiftly on; the winds that had filled her canvas lulled. A dead calm was around and about them.

The very air seemed heavy and thick.

In spite of his courage, Gomez shuddered when the gloomy shadows that guarded the entrance to the bayou fell upon him.

The boat lost its headway and remained almost motionless upon the bosom of the dark waters.

With straining eyes the fishermen gazed upon the gloom that covered the surface of the bay and then rose upward like a dark wall till it met the stars of heaven.

They saw no light or sign of life within the bayou.

"Get out the sweeps," said Gomez, softly.

The dread influence of the hour and place had its effect upon the spirit of the fisherman.

Slowly and softly the oars descended into the water.

The fishermen pulled as though they feared at each stroke to wake the specters of the lonely water cover.

The little craft felt the power of the strong arms, and she glided slowly on, the dark waters rippling with a low and mournful song from her sharp bows.

A dozen times had the long oars dipped

into the murky tide; a dozen times had the

drops of water—like long strings of elon

pearls, the prizes of Orient climes—fallen

from the polished blades and returned to

the bosom from whence they sprung, when

a sudden start and a muffled cry of Gomez

held the fishermen, like statues, to their

seats.

Dark as was the night, yet they could see

that the face of stout-hearted Gomez was pale with terror. His eyes were fixed upon the darkness before him and were staring with a stony glare.

For a moment the two looked upon the face of their comrade in amazement not unmixed with horror.

"Look!" Gomez said, in low, earnest tones; and with his finger he pointed over the bow of the boat.

Slowly the two turned their heads. They guessed from the expression upon their comrade's face that they were about to behold a startling sight.

Afar off on the dark surface of the water gleamed a circle of strange, bluish light.

It was, apparently, some twenty feet in diameter.

The gleaming circle made the surrounding darkness ten times more intense by the contrast.

Then, to their horror, they saw that the strange light was advancing toward them.

With staring eyes they gazed upon the mystic light, fear tugging with giant force at their heart-strings.

As they looked upon the circle, they saw a dark form advancing in its center!

The form seemed to rise from the waters of the bayou.

It was like the head of a huge fish, and from the shoulders extended gigantic wings.

Its eyes were eyes of fire, that shed a lurid glare upon the darkness of the night; they seemed like red coals.

"The Virgin save us!" cried Gomez, in low tones of horror; "see you the horrible figure?"

"It is a demon!" muttered Pablo, as with eyes fixed with terror, he gazed upon the awful form.

Gomez could not speak, but strove to pray to the saints to save him from the evil thing that had risen from the dark waters.

"It seems like a whale!" muttered Gomez, breathlessly. "I have sailed in northern seas, where the storm-king rages amid the icebergs; there I have seen the sea-monster, but this terrible thing has a different kind of head and wings; a winged whale my eyes never saw before."

"It is no living thing; it is a demon! look at its eyes of fire!" gasped Pablo, in fright.

Then, suddenly, the huge mouth of the

beast or demon—whatever it was—opened,

and a broad sheet of flame burst out upon

the air. For a moment it lighted up the little bay and then all was darkness.

The circle of blue light and the terrible monster, that was like unto a winged whale, both had vanished.

Like men awakened from a terrible spell, the fishermen bent to their oars, and paused not till their little boat floated on the waters of the bay.

CHAPTER II.

THE RECOGNITION.

WHILE the fishermen were flying from the terrible form which they had conjured from the dark waters, all the beauty and fashion of the city of Pensacola had gathered in the spacious barrack of the fort, that had, for the nonce, been turned into a ball-room.

The rude walls of the shed—for it was little more—were decorated with the flags of the regiment—the ball was given by the officers of the troops that garrisoned the fort—and green boughs.

Long taper candles, almost countless in number, placed wherever they could gain vantage ground, lighted up the scene.

The gay uniforms of the soldiers, and the bright-colored silk and satin dresses of the ladies, mingled with the plain coats of the civilians.

It was the grandest ball that Pensacola had ever seen.

In a corner of the room stood two men conversing. Their dress told that they were Spanish officers; the wonderful likeness between them—though one was old and the other young—said that they were kindred in blood.

The elder of the two was a man, probably, of fifty years, tall in stature, muscular in build, and with the firm carriage of the head and shoulders that told of years of military life. His face was a strange one; hair, iron-gray in hue and waving in crispy curls, clustered over a high forehead, that was tanned almost to the hue of the Indian; his eyes were jet-black and as keen as the orbs of a hawk; his nose was curved like the beak of a bird of prey, and his massive chin, hid by a full beard, iron-gray in color like his hair, told of a firm will.

Such was the person of Don Carlos Alvarado, the commandante of Pensacola. The city at the time we write of belonged to Spain and was garrisoned by Spanish troops.

His son, Estevan, was strikingly like his father in appearance. His hair and eyes were black, his form slender and graceful, not cast in the rougher mold of his sire.

Estevan Alvarado held the commission of captain in the Spanish service.

"The old barrack is ringing with many a merry step to-night," said the commandante, gazing a pleasant smile upon his face, on the joyous throng.

"Yes," replied Estevan, shortly, a moody look upon his handsome features.

The intonation of the word was caught by the quick ear of the commandante.

He turned his eyes upon his son's face for a moment.

"What's the matter, Estevan?" he asked, quietly.

"Matter, father?"

"Yes; something is the matter with you," replied the commandante, in his quiet way.

"Come, tell me what it is. I have noticed that a cloud has been upon your face ever since the ball commenced. You have not yet danced."

"No, nor do I intend to," said Estevan, biting his lip as he spoke.

"And why?"

"Because there is only one woman in this room that I care to dance with."

"That is no reason why you should not dance at all; unless, indeed, the lady be engaged for the whole evening."

"That is the reason exactly," said Estevan, with a bitter laugh; "now can you guess who the lady is?"

"I have only to follow the direction of your eyes and they lead me to her," replied the commandante, with a dry intonation in his voice.

"And you see?"

"Isabel Morena, my ward," said the commandante.

"And my promised wife!" cried Estevan, bitterly; "and yet, to-night, when I sought her hand for the dance, she said—in her cold, icy way that she was engaged for the whole of the evening."

"And you?"

"Bowed and left her. The hot passion was swelling in every vein; had I remained by her side, I might have spoken words that afterward I should have regretted."

"Estevan, my son," said the commandante, gently, "you are not proceeding in the right way to gain the love of Isabel. She is a woman—must be humored, flattered. She is beautiful, rich, a gentle and loving girl. She is worth the winning, and yet, like a rash, headstrong boy, you expect the prize to be cast at your feet without an effort on your part to secure it. You know as well as I, that Isabel does not love you; she has given her promise to become your wife, simply because I desired her to do so. The pledge is but an act of obedience, not of love. But as yet, she is heart-free. She has never seen the man whom every pulse of her being pronounced to be her master. Why should you not win her love? You are young, a dashing soldier of tried courage, and above all, you have her promise to be your wife. Tush!" cried the father, impatiently; "at thy age, boy, when passion's fires ran riot in thy heart, and the blood leaped lightly in thy veins, the woman that I loved—as you love this, one—I would have won from a thousand rivals."

"But, she does not love me."

"And she does not love anybody else; therefore thy chance is good."

"But to see her surrounded by this throng, all worshipers at the shrine of her beauty, cuts me to the heart!" exclaimed Estevan, passionately.

"The ice that you complain of, seemingly freezes you alone," said the commandante, quietly; "but who are yonder strangers? their faces are new to me."

Estevan looked in the direction indicated by his father.

He beheld two young men with bronzed faces and a sailor-like air.

"Two friends of Señor Garcia, the merchant," Estevan replied.

"What a strange face the shorter of the two has; the sun has bronzed it almost the color of the Indian."

"They are two Americans from New Orleans. I heard Garcia speak of them to-day," Estevan said.

The eyes of the commandante were fixed searchingly upon the bronzed face of the dark-hued stranger. A puzzled look appeared upon his features. He passed his hand slowly across his forehead as though by the act he would recall memories of the past.

"His face is very familiar to me," the commandante said, slowly.

Estevan looked at his father in wonder. The expression upon his face puzzled him.

"Do you know the American?" he asked. "Yes and no," the father said, with a moody air; "the face is not strange to me, and yet, I do not think that I ever looked upon it before. It recalls bitter memories of years long gone; hours of danger and of suffering rise before me from the dim vista of the past. It can not be possible that this stranger figured in the scenes that occurred long ago, for he is young; but his face stirs up strange recollections."

"If I remember right, Garcia said that it was the American's first visit to our city."

"I am a fool to let his face affect me so. It is but a fancy, nothing more," the commandante said, striving to cast aside the gloomy thoughts that had so suddenly oppressed him.

Leaving Don Carlos and his son in busy conversation, we will turn our attention to the two strangers—the Americans from New Orleans—who were conversing with the young Spanish merchant, Don Garcia.

The taller of the two was a stalwart but ungainly built Yankee from the town of Salem, Massachusetts, a broad-shouldered, powerful-limbed man, with a face as hard, angular and weather-beaten, as though it had been cut out of a pine stump. His sandy hair was cut quite short, except where two long locks curled in front of his ears. The shrewd gray eyes twinkled with a cunning expression above the high cheekbones.

"Decius Andrews—so he was called—was not a handsome man, but honesty and truth were plainly written in every line of his rugged features. In years, he had probably seen thirty-five; and for his occupation, a glance at his storm-tanned features and his rolling gait would have easily told that he was a sailor; one who snatched his fortune from the heaving billows and the roaring gale.

His companion was a man of thirty, not quite so tall as Andrews, but superbly formed. Strength and grace were in every limb; the power of a giant, the suppleness of a snake combined. The muscles of his body—now hid by the garb of civilization—the victor of the Grecian Games might have envied. The exquisite cast of his head and neck would have shamed the fabled beauty of Apollo. Hair, black as the deep sea's wing, curled in tangled masses about his temples, and strayed, carelessly, down his neck, meeting the broad, white collar. His eyes were black, large and piercing, full of fire, yet at times, soft in their lustrous tenderness. His forehead was high and broad, his nose straight, the chin square and firm, and the full mouth, which betrayed just a hint of sensual fire, told of an indomitable will.

The face of the stranger would have attracted attention in a crowd; the more so that its color was almost as dark as the hue of the red savage. It was plain that it was not the effect of the sun alone that had bronzed his features, for his hands were of the same color, and if we should roll up the coat-sleeve, 'twould be to reveal an arm, tinted like the face and hand. The bronzing was Nature's handiwork—not the kiss of sun and wind.

This man was called Rupert Vane.

Vane and Andrews were fast friends.

Garcia, a young Spaniard with dark hair and eyes, and a frank and honest face, was pointing out to the two the notabilities of the ball-room.

Andrews was listening attentively, while Vane, with a listless air paid but little heed to the gay throng that surrounded him, or to the many glances of wonder or of admiration that his strange face attracted.

"Who's those two chaps yonder, covered all over with gold lace, looking poofy as a butterfly in June?" asked Andrews, indicating the commandante, Don Carlos, and his son Estevan, as he spoke.

"That is the commandante of Pensacola, Don Carlos Alvarado, and his son, Captain Estevan," Garcia replied.

Carelessly Vane turned his head, and his glance fell upon the two. A moment he gazed, a strange expression upon his face.

Both Andrews and Garcia noticed the look of bewilderment.

Mechanically Rupert passed his hand across his brow, pushing back the shining curls that clustered over his bronzed forehead, as though they baffled thought.

"What's the matter, Vane?" asked Andrews, in wonder.

"I do not know," replied the sailor, absently. "The sight of that man's face affects me strangely."

"Do you know the commandante?" Garcia asked.

"No; this is the first time that I have ever looked upon him, and yet his face calls up memories of my childhood, of years long gone by. I can not understand it."

"Why, you are a North American!" Garcia said.

"Of course, from the good old Plymouth Rock State, where they have the poorest galls and the biggest pumpkin-pies of anywhere this side of creation!" Andrews cried, enthusiastically.

"I can not understand the emotion that comes over me when I look upon that man's face," Vane said, with his eyes still fixed upon the noble face of the aged Spaniard.

"If you don't know him, and hain't never seen him afore, why in thunder should his face trouble you?"

"That I can not tell; it is a mystery even to me," Vane replied. "His face recalls events that happened when I was but a child. They rise before me as plain as though it was but yesterday they happened. I have not thought of them for years."

"It is very strange," Garcia said.

"Yes, I can not account for it," Vane replied, with a troubled smile on his dark face.

"The commandante is a worthy gentleman," Garcia observed. "I can not say as much for his son, Captain Estevan. He is one of the wildest young men in our city; thinks more of the gaming-table and the wine-bottle than he does of any thing else. He is to marry that beautiful girl yonder, Señorita Isabel, his father's ward."

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MEDAL.

Apeculiar look appeared on the dark features of Rupert as he heard the name of Isabel, and a quick, passionate flash shot from his dark eyes.

The look was unseen by his companions, who had turned to gaze at the lady.

Andrews could not repress an exclamation of delight as his eyes fell upon the beautiful, child-like face of the girl who bore the name of Isabel Morena, and was the promised wife of Captain Estevan.

"Jerusalem crickets!" Andrews cried, with a low whistle, indicative of great astonishment; "she ain't a woman—she's a pictur!"

"Yes, she is beautiful," Garcia said, in admiration.

Rupert Vane spoke not, but his eyes kindled; his bronzed cheek burned, and the heart within his breast throbbed quicker as he looked upon the peerless beauty.

In person, Isabel Morena was about the medium height, of slender build and exquisite form. All the grace of the swaying willow was in every motion. Her complexion was as fair as Parian marble; her tresses gleamed as molten gold in the sunlight; her eyes, a heavenly blue, seemed too pure for one of earthly mold.

The face of Isabel Morena was the face of the Madonna; that face of rare beauty that the great masters—painters whose works will outlive all ages—were so fond of depicting upon their canvas. It was a face to love, to idolize!

It was not strange that the face of the beautiful girl should produce such an effect upon the two Americans.

"What do you think, Rupert?" said Andrews. "Ain't she a little ahead of any thing this side of sunrise, eh? Oh, doughnuts! she's enough to make a feller speak right out in meanin'!"

"She is a very beautiful girl," Rupert replied, quietly, but there was a sonorous ring in his deep voice that did not escape the quick ear of his friend.

"I'll give you an introduction if you like," said Garcia.

"Like! cried Andrews, quickly; "I'd gettin' all mixed up!" cried Andrews, bothered. "You don't know the gal, yet she is to know that you're here after her and—Well, this beats Sancho!"

"You shall know all in time," Rupert said, with a quiet smile. "I do not think that my plans can fail. The very boldness of my attempt will command success."

The return of Garcia put an end to the conversation.

"Follow me, senors, and you shall have your introduction," the Spaniard said.

The three proceeded across the room.

The little group gathered around Isabel scattered and made way for the three.

Garcia, in due form, presented the two strangers.

When Isabel's eyes rested upon the dark face of the sailor, Rupert Vane, a look of inquiry appeared upon her fair features. She seemed as if she was striving to recall memories of the past.

"You are strangers to our city?" Isabel asked, with a sweet smile, directing her conversation to Rupert, but as he did not answer, Andrews did, after a moment's pause.

"Yes, señorita," he said.

"Will you stay long in Pensacola?" she asked, putting the question again to Rupert.

A spell seemed on the tongue of the sailor, for, as before, he did not answer, but turned with a questioning air to Andrews.

"I do not think that we shall make a very long stay," Andrews answered, puzzled that Rupert did not reply.

The look that appeared on the face of Isabel showed that she was disappointed in not hearing the voice of Rupert.

A moment she remained silent, her eyes fixed upon the ground as if she was deep in thought. Then a bright smile illumined her face. She rose to her feet.

Andrews touched her lightly on the arm.

Rupert turned with a sudden start. The spell was broken.

"Ain't she a beauty?"

"She is more than that; she is an angel!"

Rupert replied.

"Kinder pilin' it on, ain't yer?" said Andrews, laughing.

"Did you ever see a more beautiful girl?"

"Guess I never did. She beats our Salem gals all hollow; and I tell you, New England gals are hard to beat," Andrews replied.

"Excuse me, senors," she said, as, leaning lightly upon the strong arm of the sailor, she moved away.

"If she ain't an angel, I'm a grasshopper!" exclaimed Andrews, emphatically.

As the sailor and Isabel passed through the throng and disappeared in the doorway that led to the piazza, two pairs of eyes noted them.

The eyes belonged to the commandante and his son.

"Father, did you notice Isabel?" cried Estevan, white with rage. "Arm in arm with this stranger, and she refused my escort not half an hour ago."

"All women have their whims," said the commandante, calmly. "You are too hasty; patience! You have Isabel's promise to be yours, and with that promise to aid you, and to you, it is your own fault if you can not win her love."

"I will follow your counsel," said Estevan moved slowly away. The commandante gazed after him with a sad smile.

"Hasty and quick-tempered!" he murmured.

The canoe was now lifted, carried over a spit of land, and once more put down into the water—but not the water of the main channel. They had entered the bayou.

This branch was here so closely bordered by trees that, being narrow, they arched overhead, and made such darkness that many a time and oft an owl had flown about hooting, thinking it was night.

"The Injine is right," said Steve, in that deep whisper which all who tread such dangerous ground became used to; "the Injine is right. We shall sartainly reach the farm this way slicker than other. So in with you; that tug up the O-hier has taken a considerable streak of daylight from us."

Kenewa lifted one finger to his lips, and motioned for the most complete silence.

As he did so, a low murmur of voices became distinctly audible. It came from the place where they had landed.

Fortunately the path they had taken was over the rock, where the sun being warm, but little trail would be left. Still it would not long be possible to blind the eyes of the Indians.

"Go!" whispered Kenewa. "If my brothers see me not soon at the Falls, my scalp will have been taken."

Not a word more was spoken. These leave-takings in the mighty forest were too common to excite experienced men, while to hold discussion with an Indian under such circumstances was pure folly. Kenewa had made up his mind.

The canoe was re-entered, Roland was placed forward as a scout, and the three adventurers advanced on their way. The scenery at once changed. Again the charming prairie vales came in view, where lowing wild cattle rested, and where the wolf sneaked, howling through the livelong night; gurgling brooks added their quota to increase the general streams, and tiny silent bayous noiselessly performed the same office.

The sun by this time touched the edge of the mystic horizon, swollen to treble its usual size, and was bleeding the dark and clear line of the distant plains with the clouds; but presently the separation was clearly marked by a dim streak of blue across the blood-red disk of the great luminary.

Then all was night.

And still they sped onward, and the canoe glided into darkness as a dull, heavy sound fell upon their ears. The sound of hurrying waters.

Roland waved to his companion to check the progress of the boat, pointing as he did so upward.

"What is that yonder, upright, behind that bush?" he asked.

Steve gave vent to a laugh that shook the boat, but made no other noise, ere we passed:

"A reptile," he whispered. "I didn't think the captain had a-twisted him, but he's on the wrong side of the river. The devils of Shawnees have smoked our errand. T'other side's whar the Huron was to be. Now what ter do?"

"Canoe under tree," said the low, hushed voice of the young chief, from amid the dark belt that lined the shore.

His orders were obeyed without hesitation; the whole party landed, the canoe was forced into a kind of pool, and then all crowded down to hear the Indian's report.

The party of Shawnees below, five in number, having satisfied themselves that a canoe had gone up the bayou in the direction of Judge Mason's—had determined to follow them by wading up the shallow stream. They were in no hurry, for the rest of the warriors, who seemed intuitively to guess the object of the young man's journey, were ambushed at the Falls, where the fugitives were expected to make a portage.

Kenewa had at once taken a short cut to the spot where he had met his friends, and there waited to apprise them of their danger.

In low, hushed tones a council was held. Roland's first thought was to reach the goal of his journey, which, by the river, was ten, by the forest five miles. All seemed, except Kenewa, who made no remark, equally desirous to proceed.

"And you?" asked Roland of the Huron.

"My three white brothers have decided," he said, simply; "let no one speak more."

The words had scarcely passed his lips when they heard the upward party of their foes splashing in the water close to the bank of the stream, where it was too shallow to float a huge war-canoe.

All clutched their rifles, all held their breath—a wall of green not four feet thick separated them from their fierce and relentless enemies.

The Shawnee band, composed of young and inexperienced warriors, uncontrollable by the presence of a chief, advanced, scarcely looking to the right or left, until they stood exactly opposite the hiding-place of the fugitives.

A glimmer of the eye, a compression of the lip, nothing more, and the four gallant fellows understood one another.

But they soon understood the reason which had induced the braves to halt. They had caught sight of their own crouching sentry on the right bank, and they knew that the canoe had not been captured. Where then could it be? With sudden gravity the young men decided on advancing and conferring with their elders, when a regular search of the two banks would explain the mystery.

This decided on, they hurried up-stream.

"Je—rusalem," hissed Steve, between his teeth, "that was a considerate light shave!"

"Tongue no made to talk," said Kenewa, dryly. "Come."

All involuntarily gave way to the Huron, as their recognized leader. In dangers of this kind, when men are neither foolhardy nor ignorant, the most experienced and trustworthy man at once moves to the front, as it was now. All had confidence in the Indian, and though he struck almost a backward trail and left the canoe to its fate, not a word of remonstrance was made, not a sign of hesitation discovered.

The belt of forest was soon cleared, and then, through the dark and gloomy shadows, Kenewa led the way up-stream in a direction that must soon bring them on a level with the "Falls."

Then he suddenly halted, and the whole party concealing their guns, lest the least glint of rising moonlight should fall upon the barrels, peered out in the direction indicated by Kenewa.

Twenty-painted warriors, naked to the waist, armed and in their war-paint, were entering the stream.

No one moved, no one spoke, not an eye but watched that band of bloodthirsty red-men with the deepest interest—the Huron with half-contemptuous hatred.

They divided themselves into two bands,

and as they advanced were seen to light torches, with which to explore the shore. This would certainly enable them to spy out the canoe, which would set the whole raging party on their trail.

As soon as the last Indian had entered the water, Kenewa fell into a slow trot across the open, having first selected a gentle kind of a ridge as a shelter behind which to advance in safety. His companions silently followed, and in 'em minutes more they were at the bottom of the "Falls," where the murmuring bayou fell over black rocks into the pool below.

A fearful yell rising on the night air from below now startled all the party.

"Found canoe," said Kenewa, quietly entering the stream, which, among the rocks, where the water glittered and shone in the silvery moonlight, was everywhere fordable, with care.

Again his companions obeyed, and in a remarkable short space of time all were on the opposite bank, and taking their way along the narrow natural pathway beside the rapids, that served from time immemorial as a portage.

Kenewa still was guide, and now, fearless of ambuscades, he strode erect and manly, with his gun across the hollow of his left arm.

Suddenly, as if he had been shot, he fell to the ground, imitated by his companions, who knew that this act of his portended serious danger.

"Gun—rifle—shin in rocks," said Kenewa, in a low whisper, pointing to a kind of rampart fifty feet ahead, where they could, perhaps, have held their own against a hundred Shawnees.

"I'll be darned if you ain't right," replied Steve, with a deep sigh; "we've got into a purty hornets' nest."

"Hist!" continued Kenewa, crawling to the cover of some bushes. In time, from the opposite bank came a flight of arrows, while along the path below came a dozen Indians, bent on slaughter.

They, too, when their friends shot, would have sought cover, but the murderous crack of four guns was heard, and four of the howling red-skins paid the penalty in life and limb for their incautious exposure.

Scarcely had the echoes of these shots died away, and while yet all was still, two cracks of the heavy western rifle were heard above, and as many of the bowmen bit the dust at the feet of their comrades.

None hesitated of the fugitives. They knew now who must be above, and hurried, after a word or two exchanged, to join them. It is a question who was most surprised, the two young Masons to meet Roland Edwards, or Roland Edwards to meet the two young Masons.

"Good news," said our hero, wringing their hands, and that is all that passed on their private affairs.

"I say strike for Masonville," then added Roland; "at once; if pursued we are more than a match for these ruffians."

"Good—Masonville," said the Indian, who stood on a high rock overlooking the forest, "much shoot down—log hit burn."

"Not go—kill," said the Indian, checking him; "follow Kenewa."

Away! away! through the tangled forest; under the gnarled oak they go; under the oak, the elm, and maple, by a winding trail, that, in the darkness of night, none could have followed but a native child of the wilderness.

Away! away! with burning brows, and compressed lips; up slopes, down hills, through valleys, until they come where they can hear the crackling of the flames.

A bottom is between them and the farm, a richly fertile hollow, that soon shall be an orchard, when the war-whoop of the red-man has ceased to be heard in the land.

Down into its gloomy depths they plunge, up the rugged slope, and burst—all together, one would lag for his life—like a thundercloud, upon the plain—to see—

The old man bound.

The mother a helpless body on the ground. Ella struggling wildly in the clutches of two ruffians, while three others looked moodily on.

A ringing volley of rifles, a loud shout, and the atmosphere was for a moment covered with smoke. It clears away and not one of the enemy is to be seen, until Kenewa pointed them out effecting a junction with the Shawnees on the skirt of the forest.

But little heed was taken for a moment of this alliance between the two bands; their task was first one of mercy.

"Father," said Henry, sternly, "we have other duties to perform; we have now to bury the dead, and then—"

"What, my son?"

"To avenge her."

The old man rose as if sudden life had been put into him.

"Yes! yes!" he whispered, "yes; you are right, boys."

And then he stooped, uncovered the face, kissed the cold and clammy lips, gazed earnestly and fondly at the pale, wan features, and once more returned the sheet to its place.

"I shall never forget her," he said, plainly; and then tenderly, as if she had been a suffering babe, he lifted her from the ground, and placed her on the rude bier, which the bearers at once lifted, and then moved forward slowly and reverently.

The grave was soon reached, and a few words of service read by Roland, after which all that was mortal of the judge's wife was deposited in the grave, which the sons then proceeded to fill.

Then the old man called the whole party around him.

"My friends, yesterday I had a happy home, to-day I am houseless; yesterday I had a wife, to-day I am a widower; yesterday I had two blooming daughters, to-day I have but one; the other has, during the horrors of that fearful night, lost her reason. Well? Who has been the cause of this? Know you?—do you guess?"

"None could say."

THE OATH AT THE GRAVE.

SELDOM did more splendid morning break upon a scene of more utter desolation than that which the Home Farm presented a few hours after the events we have recorded.

The log-house no longer burned, but presented a mass of charred and broken rafters and logs, the picture of desolation and ruin.

Beneath a tent lay the mortal remains of Mrs. Mason, and beside her crouched, helpless as an infant, the poor maniac, who a few hours since one of the most glorious of God's creatures. Tending her with an affectionate earnestness that was pitiable to behold, was Etie, whose streaming eyes, trembling lips, and convulsed frame sufficiently showed the agony she had endured and still suffered.

Martha moved about silently and stealthily. She began to have a faint suspicion of the evil she had done in speaking to an utter stranger; for, from a few words she had said, she now suspected that he was the author of this fearful outrage.

The old man slept. Agony exhaustion, suffering had taken peculiar effect upon him, and had sent him off into one of those deep and dreamless slumbers which are akin to death.

A little further off stood a group: the actors of the previous night, and two stout, hearty farm laborers. These men, who from their lowly position, were not fit game for the bandits, had been secured within their own huts previous to the attack on the log.

"Roland Edwards," said Henry, the elder son, "you have come at a sad time, and I fear me your good news will avail but little.

All answered, "Amen!"

"We are united; a band of men to do justice upon assassins and murderers," he

and as they advanced were seen to light torches, with which to explore the shore. This would certainly enable them to spy out the canoe, which would set the whole raging party on their trail.

"The same here," cried James; and the three young men wrung one another's hand.

"Michel," then said the elder son, in a voice of deep solemnity, "bring along the spade and mattocks, that we may dig our mother's grave." And the brave fellow dashed away the scalding tears which no stoical effort could restrain.

All followed to the spot they had selected, which was by a seat under a tree, where in life she had loved to sit.

A tall cedar stood gracefully in the wind, a tiny stream rippled softly by, while above, from sunny morn to dewy eve, the feathered choristers would sing over her lonely grave.

No one offered to lend a hand.

Silent and solemn the youths began their self-assigned task, while the others stood around, with lowering brows leaning on their rifles.

"Hold!" suddenly said a solemn voice, and the judge, pale, ghostly, but sterner than ever, stalked into their midst.

"Ah!" he cried, as his eyes fell upon Roland, "this wretch here! How dare he!"

The sons took each a hand of the youth.

"Father," said Henry, gently, "by the memory of our sainted mother, I say we have wronged Roland. There is no time for explanations. All is well, and you are a richer man than ever."

"Rich!" cried the old man, with a haggard look, as he gladly folded Roland to his bosom, "rich! what avails it? Will riches give me back my wife? Will riches restore reason to my child—my child, Roland, your wife, that was to be—but never, never, never! Well, well, Roland, I'm glad to see you, very glad to see you. Now what are you doing, boys?"

They held down their heads.

"Ashamed, boys? No; dig, dig, dig! for the mother that bore you: she brought you into the world, and 'tis fair you should see her out of it."

And the judge turned away with a laugh that made all the listeners' blood curdle in their veins.

It was a bright, sunny morn, and the trees waved gently and softly, and the birds caroled cheerily in the heavens, and nature in her richest hue lay mantling in all her gorgeous splendor before them, as their hearts were too full for speech, these two brave boys dug their mother's grave.

Steve and Kenewa, ever alive to their duties as scouts, were outlying in the forest on the watch for the murderous white ruffians and their red-skin associates.

At last the task was over, and the young men came up from the pit.

Judge Mason sat upon a bench outside the tent, silent, motionless, with dark and lowering brows; his eyes were fixed upon the sheet which covered the corpse.

Of all the old man's wealth, of all his vast possessions, better than gold, jewels or precious stones, was that senseless clay from which the mystic soul had departed, and which was now fit only to be returned to earth—dust to dust, ashes to ashes.

Martha glided ghost-like into the tent and spoke to Etie.

"Good heavens!" cried the elder son, as he rose, took Ella by the arm, who obeyed her as a child, and led her forth a little way out of sight.

Then came Henry, James and Roland, with Tom as fourth, with a rude litter to take her away.

The old man roused himself and looked round.

"Already," he said, feebly, "already. Would you shut her out from me now? Wait another day—one day, my children. Thirty years have we lived in the valley of the shadow of death; thirty years, my boys, together, without a word of unkindness. I say strike for Masonville," then added Roland; "at once; if pursued we are more than a match for these ruffians."

"Good—Masonville," said the Indian, who stood on a high rock overlooking the forest, "much shoot down—log hit burn."

"Not go—kill," said the Indian, checking him; "follow Kenewa."

Away! away! through the tangled forest; under the oak, the elm, and maple, by a winding trail, that, in the darkness of night, none could have followed but a native child of the wilderness.

Away! away! with burning brows, and compressed lips; up slopes, down hills, through valleys, until they come where they can hear the crackling of the flames.

A bottom is between them and the farm, a richly fertile hollow, that soon shall be

HER ANSWER.

BY EBEN E. REXFORD.

I held her hand close in my own, And said, "I love you, alone."

She did not answer; but her eyes

Sought mine, as though in great surprise,

Then fell, and blushed swept her cheek;

I thought she did not dare to speak.

"Come, then, at once."

The three departed, and the quay of San Mark was deserted.

In a cosy chamber of Leoni's palace, hung with red velvet tapestries, radiant with Tyrian purple and shimmering gold, sat the young Venetian captain, Leoni, and the Greek slave, Telda.

Night and Morning were the two. Leoni, jet-black hair and eyes; Telda, heavenly blue orbs and tresses of the hue of the ripened wheat basking in the sunbeams.

The arm of the young soldier was clasped tenderly around the taper waist of the girl, and the black eyes looked love into the blue.

"Fortune smiles lovingly upon me, my Telda," said Leoni, his right hand toying with the golden tresses of the maid. "In one little hour I won both fame and you. Am I not blessed?"

"And will you always love me, Leoni, as well as now?" she asked, with a glance full of love in the face of the young Venetian.

"Yes, until the sun grows cold and the stars of heaven fade and die."

"You love the poor slave?"

"No, I love the beautiful woman whose passion makes for me a heaven on earth," Leoni replied, warmly. "But, Telda, tell me something of your life."

"It is but a simple story. All my life from early childhood has been spent in the galley of the Corsair or at his island home, among the caves in the rocks where Sysros kept his spoils."

"Is the Corsair your father?"

"No," replied Telda, quickly. "He pursued me in the slave market. I am a Greek, torn, I suppose, from my parents by corsairs like unto Sysros. He intended me for his wife. Your brave arm snatched me from a fate worse than death."

"It was not written in the stars that one so fair as you, my Telda, should become the prize of the merciless sea rover," said Leoni, fondly. "A brighter fate is in store for you, and that is to be the wife of the Venetian captain, Leoni."

Finally the young soldier kissed the soft lips of the willing maid.

"Dared I!" and Leoni's hot blood leaped into his cheeks.

"Yes; and by so doing have you forfeited your life!"

"Who has the right to hold me to an account for the act?" demanded Leoni, in heat.

"The law of Venice! Know, rash soldier, that the law of the Republic decrees death to any Venetian of noble blood who shall so far forget his rank as to marry with a slave, and thus taint his ancient blood with an ignoble current."

The color fled from Leoni's cheeks, and Telda's full lips unclosed in a low moan of agony.

"You have broken the law; your doom is sealed. Both should die, but in consideration of the brave services that you have done the State, mercifully we spare your life, Leoni, but pronounced on you the sentence of eternal banishment from Venice," said the cold voice of the chief of the Three.

"And Telda's fate?" questioned Leoni, with pallid lips.

"Death!"

Like a knell of doom the single word rung in the ears of the young lovers.

"Hear me but a moment!" cried Leoni, in despair. "It is I that have committed the crime; it is but justice, then, that I alone should suffer. This poor child knew not of your laws. I saved her from the power of the dreaded Corsair; she was his preserver. I loved her and she gave her young life into my keeping. Let me alone atone for the fault. The law outraged, demands a victim. Take my life, then, and spare this helpless girl."

"It can not be. The girl must die," said the masked judge, sternly. "Officers, your duty."

The black-robed figures advanced.

In utter despair Leoni clasped the girl to his heart and imprinted a farewell kiss upon her cold lips.

Death had no terrors after such a parting.

Then suddenly, with a noiseless step, a masked man entered the hall, and, bending low before the judge, spoke.

"The Corsair, Sysros, haunting Venice in disguise, has been struck down by some unknown foe who recognized him. He is dying, and implores an audience with the Council of Three. He declares he has a secret to unfold respecting the Doge and the young Venetian soldier, Leoni."

dear, but you ought not to accuse me of doing what I'd never do."

She smiled up in his dark face, but there was only a heavier shadow gathering there.

"Olympia! you do not pretend to deny that you are deporting yourself in a most unwise, unprincipled—"

A swift warning gleam in her beautifully blue eyes bade him desist from his sweeping accusations.

"Harry Verener, don't call me 'unprincipled'; remember I am your wife, and as such, entitled to respect."

He frowned, then smiled sarcastically.

"Exactly; for the same reason, I expect proper conduct on your behalf. As it is, do you think it modest and ladylike to accept all these attentions from Howard Ingold?"

A hot, red flush swept over Olympia Verener's white face; she bit her lips till they were bloodless, so steadily did she strive to retain command of the bitter words that burst from her tongue's end.

Her husband seemed half exultant at her passion, and a cold gleam was in his eyes when he retorted:

"The 'shoe fits,' Olympia. You know you and Howard Ingold are in love with each other, while I, always *de trop*, can make the best of it."

Gradually her cheeks had lost their crimson tinge, and when Mr. Verener ceased speaking, Olympia arose from her chair, very elegant, very stylish, very womanly, in her graceful dignity.

"Harry, I will not retaliate with harsh words, for they will only serve to widen the chasm I fear you are determined to place between us. Harry, you *surely* do not mean to accuse me—me, your wife, of disloyalty to you, and for Mr. Ingold?"

Her quiet, passionless manner was lost upon Mr. Verener, who, as he looked on her beauty, so marked, so rare, only felt a thrill of terrible jealousy when he remembered that Olympia had aforetime expressed, in her own peculiar way, full of impulsive enthusiasm, her extreme admiration for Mr. Howard Ingold; and, as I have faithfully tried to serve both you and Olympia through the sad affair, I can assure you I shall leave no stone unturned to prove my assertions regarding that man, and also to reunite you and your wife—unless, indeed—"

She hesitated, grew almost solemn in her manner, the while steadily regarding Harry with her wondrous gray eyes, so full of lights and shadows.

"Mr. Verener, your heart seemed to pause for a second; that peculiar 'unless, indeed' had thrilled him with a nameless terror.

"What—Irene—tell me?"

On the impulse of the moment he addressed her as he never had done before, and her eyes fairly scintillated when she heard it.

"Because I have a dreadful fear, Mr. Verener, that he has usurped your place in your wife's affections; not that I would suspect Olympia of a wrong act, understand me, please, only Harry, it behoves us to be very cautious."

How naturally it fell from her lips—that Harry!—and his ears had not heard it from her eyes for many a day.

"I am overpowered by this revelation! do you think—Pshaw, why discuss it? I must beg you to permit me to say adieu now."

A pang of pitiful remorse had suddenly come to Harry Verener as he heard his wife's name used so lawlessly, and, acting as he often did from a sudden impulse, he withdrew, leaving Irene puzzled at his strange conduct.

But there was unmistakable triumph in her eyes, as she watched him away.

"Would another woman living dare play so desperate a game on such small chances? But success is crowning my efforts, and when the clematic stars drop off, Olympia Verener will have been separated from her husband, and I, I, Irene Seaford, will have won him! Only a little more planning, a little more patience!"

A week afterward it was, that Olympia Verener received a note from Howard Ingold, asking her to meet him at the cottage of the gardener, with whose wife he had arranged for the use of one of her rooms for a short time. He said he would only detain her a few moments, as he wished only to ask a question of her.

To say Mrs. Verener was indignant, but partly expresses the anger, almost fury, of her manner when she read the note.

"How dare he!" she almost screamed, dashing the paper from her, and rising with scarlet-stained cheeks. "After his insulting propols the other day, when I forbade that he ever should speak to me again—how, I wonder, dare he address me thus? I'll take Jasper, if he's not busy at the stables, and go see him cowhided!"

Trembling with excitement and indignation, she donned saucy and bonnet, and started for the colored coachman.

At the side entrance her husband met her; his face wearing an unusual pallor, his eyes glowing nervously.

"Out for a walk?"

He was, as lately, frigidly courteous.

"Yes," she returned, and hurried on, while Harry, with compressed lips, watched her out of sight.

Then he took a scrap of paper from his memorandum-book, and re-read the few lines thereon.

"Dear FRIEND—I fear for the worst. To my own certain knowledge, Mr. H. I. has begged an interview at the stone cottage, and if O. goes out at nine or thereabouts—but I will not say further. I. S."

"Was Miss Seaford right when she thus warned me? Good Heavens! that it should come to this! that I should be—"

He thrust the paper in his pocket, and without completing the sentence, hastened off toward the cottage, strange, agonizing thoughts of Olympia's falsehood, mingled with the rare beauty of Irene Seaford, chasing wildly through his brain.

The door was ajar an inch or so, and clearly and distinctly came Olympia's voice from within; and with his eager eyes to the crack, he saw Howard Ingold, handsome, listless, sitting at ease by the table, his eyes fixed on Mrs. Verener's face, that Harry could not read.

He heard the high, indignant tones, and saw her hand stretched passionately out, and as he listened, a deep, intense bliss crept slowly over his soul.

"I certainly consider it an insult, sir—the words you have spoken to me, the wife of Mr. Verener. What have I ever said or done to warrant this disrespect you have shown me? True it was, I liked you as a friend; but rest assured, from this day we are strangers."

"Or enemies?" Mr. Ingold said, lowly. "I would not wish that, for your sake."

"No," added Olympia, sarcastically, "for then, perhaps, you or your friend, Miss Seaford, might renew your attempts to come between Harry and I."

Ingold twirled his cane half angrily, and Mrs. Verener burst forth again.

"Jasper outside waiting to administer a little necessary rebuke. Which is your choice, sir, an apology to Harry Verener or a whipping?"

"Neither, my darling! Let this gentleman take his leave forever."

And Harry stepped in and took his wife in his arms.

And so the artful machinations of one pair



Who Was to Blame?

BY JULIA SOUTHERN.

"Bring him before us," said the Chief of the Three.

On a rude litter the stricken Corsair was borne into the council-chamber.

The ashy hue of death was in the swarthy face of the sea-king.

"You stand before the Council of Three; speak," said the chief.

With glaring eyes Sysros gazed around him.

"Andres, Doge of Venice, do you remember the young soldier, Foscari, once thy rival? I am he! You banished me from Venice. I swore revenge. I kept the oath. I returned to Venice, stole thy child, and thus saved thy heart."

"May Heaven be merciful and forgive me as I do now?" said the Doge, removing the mask from his face.

"You forgive the wrong?" gasped the outcast in astonishment.

"Yes, as I hope to be forgiven."

"Fear not, Telda; Heaven will protect us. We are innocent of crime against the Republic of Venice," said the Doge.

Quickly the prisoners were conveyed to the tribunal chamber of the Three.

Three masked men sat in judgment.

Leoni knew he stood before the famous Council of Three, whose will was supreme in Venice.

"Captain Leoni, you have committed a heinous crime, the penalty of which, by the law of Venice, is death," said the masked figure who sat in the center and was apparently the chief of the Three.

"Knowingly I have never sinned against the laws of my native land," replied the young soldier, undauntedly; "since I came to man's estate, I have periled life and limb in the service of the Republic of Venice, and shed my blood as freely as though it had been water. Let me know the crime that I stand charged with?"

"Look upon this maid," said the chief of the Three, pointing to the Greek girl.

"Telda?"

"Yes; who and what is she?"

"A Greek girl torn from her parents by pirates and rescued by me from the power of the Corsair Sysros."

"She was his alone?"

"Perhaps so; all captives to the Corsair are slaves, be their country what it will," Leoni replied.

"You have dared to marry this girl?"

"Good; but how ruin him?" cried Marco.

"Could I not call you by another name?" he asked.

"Yes," Sysros frankly replied; "years ago in Venice you and I walked side by side. An act of crime, and the republic banished me for life. Fully have I repaid the debt. The man who worked my ruin is now the Doge of Venice. I squared accounts with him at the time, for I stole his infant child and gave it to a Greek to rear as a slave."

"But why do you join us against Leoni?"

"Ask my wrecked and shattered galley that strew dark Candia's shore!" cried Sysros, in heat.

"And even now, does he not revel in the charms of a slave, a Greek girl—as fair as an angel—whom he captured on my galley?"

"Telda?"

"Yes."

"He has married her."

"And therefore would I ruin him. The girl is lost to me forever, but I have sworn that she shall not enjoy her charms."

"Good; but how ruin him?" cried Marco.

"Captain Leoni, you have committed a heinous crime, the penalty of which, by the law of Venice, is death," said the masked figure who sat in the center and was apparently the chief of the Three.

"Knowingly I have never sinned against the laws of my native land," replied the young soldier, undauntedly; "since I came to man's estate, I have periled life and limb in the service of the Republic of Venice, and shed my blood as freely as though it had been water. Let me know the crime that I stand charged with?"

"Look upon this maid," said the chief of the Three, pointing to the Greek girl.

"Telda?"

"Yes; who and what is she?"

"A Greek girl torn from her parents by pirates and rescued by me from the power of the Corsair Sysros."

of villains was brought to a timely, happy end; and in later days Harry and Olympia learned how the two—Irene Seaford and Howard Ingold, had planned it all together, each for their own wicked ends.

And they also learned, by their bitter experience, how much better it is that there be perfect confidence on all subjects between husband and wife.

Oath-Bound:

OR,
THE MASKED BRIDE.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL,
AUTHOR OF "SHADOWED HEART," "SCARLET CRESS," ETC.

CHAPTER XIV.

A STORMY INTERVIEW.

She had not long to wait; for, on the stroke of the hour, Bertrand Haughte opened the door; pale, frigid, angered.

"I am here, Undine Del Rose."

He never bowed, or otherwise acknowledged her presence.

"No. I am Undine Del Rose no longer. I have the honor of being Mrs. Haughte, of The Towers. Oh, Bertrand! Bertrand!"

and her tones lost their slight touch of sarcastic triumph, and sunk to a low, entropic murmur, "don't quite hate me! I have but one excuse, and that is my love for you. Nothing else would have warranted the awful risk I have run. And see, Bertrand, Providence has signally favored me; for not even you read my identity."

She laid her hands on his shoulder, and looked up in his face, as white as death, with eyes that would have annihilated her, had that been possible.

He dashed her off with a gesture of infable scorn and disgust.

"Don't touch me! don't mention the holy name of the Almighty with those false, lying lips! Say rather that Satan and all his angels have aided you in this fiendish scheme! Woman—tell me how you dared do it; tell me, before I crush all your life out of you!"

He advanced a step toward her, his hot breath flaming on her cheeks.

"Bertrand, be reasonable. Remember, I am your bride, married to you by every law that the land demands. Listen, Bertrand, while I humble myself to you, and beg and pray you to love me a—"

"Silence! not a word of such blasphemy from your lips! I command you, tell me what you mean—the woman I hate and abhor! the woman who shall never be my wife, despite all your infernal machinations."

Undine smiled defiantly.

"And suppose I refuse to listen to your demand?"

"Then I will wrench it from you! What did you do to my betrothed?"

"A strange question for my husband to ask his wife!"

"You madden me! I your husband? Never, if you were the last woman on God's earth. You, the arch fiendess, my wife! who has crushed my happiness the second time? Not if I could thereby earn your eternal salvation!"

"I am sorry you persist in this style of language. Bertrand, doesn't it move you in the least when you know what I have dared to do for your sake?"

He paced to and fro while she was speaking; then he stopped before her.

"Does it move me? Yes, with infinite pity and tenderness when I think of my crushed Crystel; moved to scorn and disgust when I look at you with all the beauty you have used to cover your wickedness."

"You thought and spoke differently the evening you spent in Lexington avenue; the morning we rode in the Central Park."

A blush of angry shame flooded his face.

"If I was infatuated then, I am disenchanted now! I thank God you have no legal claim on me!"

She laughed lightly.

"I think I have. Are we not lawfully married?"

"Married?" He fairly thundered the word; "Never will I admit it! Before the world I will proclaim your treachery!"

She extended her hand, on which glittered the curious green-and-scarlet-veined jewel.

"You do not regard this? You are no longer afraid of it?"

He grasped her slender wrist, and tore the ring from her finger.

"Should I fear an impostor, a thief, as I believe you to be? or a ring that is my own, and that never wrought me any harm?"

A sudden, intense light shot from her eyes, and she compressed her lips a moment before she answered.

"It may never yet have wrought harm, but I swear that it shall. Now, Bertrand Haughte, what are we to do?"

He curled his lips contemptuously.

"I neither care, nor feel at all interested in your future movements. I shall take the first train to Edenwilde, and further expose this treachery. And if harm comes to Crystel Roscoe, *iccō* to you!"

He never vouchsafed her a glance as he went out, and as the door closed after him, his parting words echoed on her ear:

"Woe to you!"

Was it a curse or a prophecy? And so far, her deeply-plotted plans, her superhuman effort that had been so tantalizingly crowned with success, had come to this!

She walked up and down, and around that elegant room; while, like a keen poniard at her heart, was the bitter, unendurable anguish of the knowledge that he did not love her—never would love her.

She sunk down exhausted, on one of the sofas, cursing the luckless fate that had lured her on to fondly hope and believe he would forget Crystel Roscoe, his first love, the moment he saw her.

"I have been worse than mad! I have been too hasty; I have thwarted what long-suffering patience might have accomplished. And now, he despises me; while I—oh, I shall die for the want of his love!"

A look of unutterable despair came over her face.

"And while I've been engaged, heart and soul, in seeking to win this man; while I crazed my brains in scheming, planning and contriving, I've lost the other; who, before I saw Bertrand Haughte, I loved as I thought I never could love again. Clifford Temple has passed beyond my reach; these accursed Haughtes have won him, too! And I, I am alone unloved, despised! I can not bear it; I will die! My brain is scorching, and my heart—my poor, tormented heart—that is broken and bleeding!"

And all that long, dreary night she sat there; and the fire burned itself away to a handful of ghostly ashes; the light was turned down by some one below as the day came on.

In the cold, gray dawn of that winter's morning, shivering and numb, she still sat on; the stages began to go rattling by; the hum and bustle of a waking city grew gradually louder, and yet Undine never moved from her position.

After a hour or so, the chambermaid tapped for admission; that aroused her, and she called to her to come in an hour.

She was fearfully changed, and a faint cry of horror issued from her blue lips as she looked at herself in the mirror.

"Cursed fall on him forever, who has wrought this!"

Her eyes had seemed to freeze; from a warm, liquidly passionate light in their dark depths they had turned to a hard, dull, lusterless eyes, with neither soul or expression in them; around her mouth were deep, tense lines, that forty years of life would hardly have drawn there.

Such were Annette's thoughts as she hurried along.

At the window stood Crystel, softly tapping the glass with her kid-gloved fingers; then the train came rushing in. Crystel placed her hand in her pocket to take from the hem her portmanteau, that she never deemed safe in a crowd out of her hands.

Once in the train, she replaced it, and found, to her vexation, that she had lost both her handkerchief and a valued penknife—a gold-and-pearl-handled one, that had been a present from Helliee years before, when she was a school-girl, and that bore her initials, C. R., handsomely engraved.

She uttered a little exclamation, and the lady who sat next her looked up from the afternoon paper she was reading.

"Have you lost your money?"

It was a rather strained, harsh voice, and Crystel glanced at the massive gray puff of hair that filled the inside of her bonnet; a small plain sacque and dark dress; the cotton gloves; the brown vail; in her inquisitive way, before she answered.

"No, thank you. Only my handkerchief and pen-knife."

Then she leaned toward the window, and dismissing the thought of her trifling loss, was soon deep in her plans that had led her to thus secretly go to the city. She had but one object; and that was, knowing where Bertrand had gone, to follow, and thus satisfy herself as to whether the strange, bold girl who had married him had any designs on his life, since he had repulsed her love.

Crystel loved Bertrand greatly, and it was that love that urged her on; that compelled her, as it were, to follow the sudden, powerful impulse to go. What caused her to first think of it she knew not then; only in after days did she know it was the iron finger of her inevitable fate that drew her whithersoever it would.

But, after all her coming to the city, she was unable to find Bertrand; he had changed his mind as to the route he should take, and Crystel, after visiting several stores and offices where both were acquainted, returned to the depot, and reached Edenwilde a half-hour before the gentlemen.

She was a little nervous, and in her endeavors to preserve her innocent little secret, she attracted the ever-watchful attention of Helliee; and although she made no remarks, she wondered what was the matter with Crystel.

Bertrand was pacing the floor, like a chained tiger, who can not brook another instant's confinement.

"But, man, has she no delicacy thus to thrust herself upon me? Where is her womanhood that if does not cry out upon her?"

Temple's answer was a gloomy laugh.

"Natures like hers know no reason when their will determines to attain to any object. I have known the girl since she was a child, and I can say, with truth, that she is the most passionate-tempered person I ever saw."

"But a divorce can be obtained; it is merely a question of time."

"Yes; but you may depend upon it, that she will never leave you to yourself."

Crystel's eyes grew bright with the anger in their depths.

"Undine Del Rose *doe* not cross his path again. Let her but attempt it, and I will find a way to remove her."

Bertrand smiled upon her.

"With so loving and brave a champion and protectress, what should I dread, Temple?"

"I hope my words will prove an idle song; I fear—But, let us not court such a blow!"

"There are strong enough thoughts. There comes your maid with your shawl; the room seems chilly."

It was Annette, but no one noticed her.

"I shall have to bid you good-morning, Miss Crystel; and if I carry Bertrand to the Central Park gate, seventh avenue and Fifty-ninth street, to-night, at nine o'clock. I will meet you there. If you value your future happiness, come."

"The White Witch."

So read the letter that the young man pursued. The mystery seemed to be thickening around him.

"Who can this mysterious person be?" he asked, in wonder. "How can she watch my footstep in this way. I must find the servant; perhaps from him I can learn who gave him the letter?"

Acting at once on the thought, Montgomery ascended the stairs again. After giving him the letter the servant had gone upstairs.

Montgomery had not noticed the face of the man particularly, but he had no doubt that he could tell him again at a glance.

In the corridor at the head of the stairs, Montgomery met one of the servants. A single look into his face and the young man thought that he recognized the person who had given him the letter.

"Who gave you that letter for me?" Montgomery asked, accosting the servant.

The colored waiting-man looked at Montgomery in astonishment.

"Did you speak to me, sir?" he asked.

"Yes; who gave you the letter that you handed me just now?" repeated Montgomery.

"Letter, sir?" said the servant, rolling up his eyes in astonishment.

"Yes, the one you gave me a moment ago; you remember, Mr. Montgomery's letter?"

"The young man was sure that he had got hold of the right man, for his voice was familiar as well as his face.

"Bress de Lord! I didn't give yer no letter, boss!" exclaimed the negro.

"Yes you did," persisted Montgomery, who guessed at once that the man had been bribed to silence.

"Bress de Lord! I didn't give yer no letter, boss!" exclaimed the negro.

"To me!" exclaimed Pipgan, apparently astonished. "Why, how could it be? But let's see what's inside."

The Englishman opened the letter and read it through carefully.

"What do you think of it?" asked Montgomery, after waiting for Pipgan to speak out, and finding that he did not.

"Well, I don't know," said the Englishman, slowly. "It sounds like the letter of

retired to her own room; one she occupied alone.

"All the disguise I need will be to arrange this gray hair of mine, and powder my face as white as I can. These heretofore tell-tale eyes of mine have done their last mischief!"

And, indeed, in her plain, dark dress and sacque, the puffs of gray hair, the dull, lusterless eyes, no one, even Clifford Temple or Mrs. St. Havens herself, would have known her.

She had plenty of time to get to the station; and by going down a side-entrance, she met no one of the family servants.

"I wonder if my suspicions are correct? Could she have gone to The Towers? or did I read her thoughts aright, and see her own window as she hastened back this way?"

At any rate, if she's not at the depot—and what she means by going is more than even I can tell; however, she shall never get out of my sight while I have power to watch her—as I said, if she's not at the depot, it's easy coming home again."

Such were Annette's thoughts as she hurried along.

At the window stood Crystel, softly tapping the glass with her kid-gloved fingers; then the train came rushing in. Crystel placed her hand in her pocket to take from the hem her portmanteau, with that extended his mouth from ear to ear.

"And now, who gave you the letter?"

"Iclare to goodness, boss, I don't know nuffin' bout de letter!" was again replied.

Montgomery's brows contracted. "He saw that he had not bid high enough.

"Hark ye, my friend," he said, "will a five-dollar note induce you to tell me who gave you that letter?"

"Then the office bell sounded.

"Dat's me!" exclaimed the servant;

"much obliged for de dollar, boss," and he hurried down-stairs.

Montgomery was perplexed.

He was sure that he had spoken with the very man who had given the letter to his hands.

"The fellow must be well paid," he muttered, "to keep the secret so faithfully."

"How the deuce can I discover who this mysterious woman is?" Montgomery pondered over the difficult question. "By Jove!" he said suddenly, "the best way will be to keep the appointment, made in the letter, of this White Witch." The Seventh avenue gate, Central Park. The Seventh avenue gate, Central Park.

"Good, I'll be there. What the deuce can the new misfortune be?"

"At nine o'clock, to-morrow night."

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"Good, I'll be there. What the deuce can the new misfortune be?"

"At nine o'clock, to-morrow night."

"What do you see in the street that is so interesting, Leone?" he asked, approaching her.

"Nothing."

"You are a foolish girl to look so long and earnestly upon nothing," O'Connell said, with a sneer, and, as he spoke, he drew a chair to him and sat down in it, facing the girl.

"Leone, have the kindness to transfer your attention from the outside world to your humble servant for a few minutes and you will greatly oblige the subscriber," O'Connell said, in a tone of mock politeness.

"Well?" and Leone turned her face from the window and looked, coldly, at O'Connell.

"Good; that is better," and then O'Connell surveyed the face of the girl for a few moments in silence.

"Why do you look at me so intently?" Leone asked.

"I am reading."

"Reading?"

"Yes, your face. It is very interesting," O'Connell said, a peculiar smile hovering phantom-like around his mouth.

"And what do you read there?"

"That you have obeyed my orders."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; Montgomery has been here to see you; he has told you that he loved you, and you have told him that he was loved in return."

"You are sure of it?"

"Quite," O'Connell answered, coolly. "Why, the truth is as plainly written in your face as though the words were imprinted there. There is a joyous look in your flashing, dark eyes, a smile of happiness upon your lips, where, possibly, the perfume of his warm kiss yet lingers. Don't try to deceive me, Leone. I have known you too long to be easily deceived."

"I have not denied the truth of your words," she said, slowly.

"And you are now Montgomery's promised wife?"

"Yes."

"Good!" O'Connell rubbed his hands together, softly, as if in joy. "All then is as I wish. Leone, you have played your part well. You have kept your word with me and I will keep mine with you."

"You will release me from the bond that binds me to you?"

"Yes, you shall be free, your own mistress, no longer the slave of my will. Doesn't a bright vision of happiness arise before you?"

"Why should I dream of happy days to come?" the girl asked, slowly.

"Why should you not?" he said, in a tone of wonder. "If the past has been dark and gloomy, is that a reason why the future should be also sad?"

"No, but—"

"But what?" he asked, impatiently. "You have won the love of Angus Montgomery; if the old saying is true, love is the whole of a woman's life; though with man, it is but the history of a day. You love and you are loved. What more can you ask?"

"You speak as if you thought that I intended to become Montgomery's wife," the girl said, her dark eyes flashing as she spoke.

"Of course," replied O'Connell, coolly; "you are not such an idiot as to refuse him?"

"I shall never be his wife," Leone replied.

"Are you mad?" O'Connell exclaimed.

"No, I am only just."

"Just?" and O'Connell's tone was sneering in the extreme.

"Yes, both to him and to myself," answered Leone, firmly. "I promised you that I would try and make him love me; you compelled me to do so, for, by the word that I gave years ago, I am as a slave in your hands. But I will never deceive the man who has honored me with his love. After you release me from my promise, I will tell Angus Montgomery who and what I am."

"You're a fool!" exclaimed O'Connell, coolly.

"Better a fool than to act a knavish part!" replied the girl, quickly.

"Well, it is your affair, not mine," O'Connell said, carelessly. "And now to business. You remember what I wished you to do?"

"Obtain Montgomery's check?"

"Yes, the check to be filled up by you."

"Suppose that he objects to this?"

"If he loves you, he will not," O'Connell replied.

"Lionel, why do you hate this man so bitterly?" asked the girl, suddenly.

"What is that to you?" replied O'Connell, coolly.

"You must have some reason."

"I have. Did you ever know me to do any thing without a reason?" he asked.

"Never," she replied; "you are cold and calculating; your heart must be marble, not flesh."

"Perhaps it is," he replied, with a light laugh. Then a sudden thought occurred to him. "Leone," he said, abruptly, "as I entered the hotel just now, a man stood in the doorway, whose face seemed strangely familiar to me."

"Well?"

"His face sent a cold chill through every vein, and you know, Leone, I am not easily agitated. Can you guess why this man's face should trouble me?"

"No," she replied, absently. She was hardly heeding his words; her thoughts were far away.

"It was because his face recalled to my mind the affair in England that so nearly cost me my life."

The girl started and a cloud came over his face as he spoke.

"Why should the face of this stranger remind you of that dreadful event?" she asked.

"That I can not tell; but the face had some connection with the affair."

"Ah!" and Leone started suddenly, as the exclamation broke from her lips.

"What's the matter?" O'Connell asked, noticing the strange expression upon her face.

"Your words have recalled to my mind something that I intended to tell you before, but I forgot to speak of it. Some time ago, a man, evidently an Englishman, came to the door and wished to know if I wanted to purchase a little dog that he had for sale."

"Well, what of that?" asked O'Connell, who saw nothing remarkable in the circumstance.

"When I asked the dog's name, he answered that it was called Mally, short for Malper."

O'Connell could not repress an exclamation of surprise as the name fell upon his ears.

"Malper!" he muttered.

"Yes, I thought that the coincidence was strange. I did not let the man see that the name was familiar to me, and carelessly I

said that the name was a strange one; he replied that it was the name given to the puppy by the man from whom he had bought it."

O'Connell remained silent for a few moments busy in thought.

"What was this man like?" he asked, suddenly.

"He was not quite so tall as you are; dressed common, but not shabby; keen gray eyes and light yellow hair."

"Any beard?"

"No."

"Was his hair curly?"

"No; straight."

"His face thin; rather a large nose?"

"Yes," she replied.

"His face thin; rather a large nose?"

"Leone, the face of your dog-man is exactly the face of the man that I met just now at the hotel door, below; I am afraid that we are in danger."

A troubled look swept over the face of the girl.

"Then you think—"

"That a sleuth-hound is on our track?" he said, with fierce accent.

Leone shuddered and covered her face with her hands.

"Do not fear!" he cried; "leave my wits alone to get the better of this fellow who has tracked us over the broad ocean. He is hunting us; in turn, I'll hunt him. Don't fear; the danger is as yet far in the distance. Lose no time in getting Montgomery to sign the check. That done, I release you from your promise, and you are free to go where you like and with whom you like."

"Montgomery is coming to-morrow. I will try and carry out our wishes."

"Do so; I will come again to-morrow evening. Till then, good-by," and O'Connell left Leone to her own sad thoughts.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 49.)

The Blackfoot Queen:

OR,

OLD WHIFFLES IN THE VALLEY OF DEATH.

A Sequel to "The Phantom Princess."

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS,

AUTHOR OF "THE PHANTOM PRINCESS"; OR, NED

HAZEL, THE BOY TRAPPER."

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE TOILS.

LITTLE did Nick Whiffles and Ned Mackintosh dream of the experience to which Leone was doomed, when they left her in the wood.

Her position seemed so secure against discovery by the Blackfeet, that even the veteran trapper deemed it perfectly safe, so long as the darkness lasted.

The girl resolved to obey the instruction of her old friend to the letter, and drawing the blanket close around her, she sat down at the foot of the tree, under which she had been standing, and almost instantly sunk into a profound slumber, for she needed rest, as much as did her lover.

As they flared up they made the immediate circle in which they were standing as light as day.

Perhaps, in her distress, Leone's remarkable beauty was increased, for when the young chief turned his dark eyes upon her, there was no anger and nothing but love in his expression, and with something like sadness in his voice, he asked:

"Why did the Queen of the Woods flee from me?"

"She wished to go to her own home and kindred."

"Her home is with the Blackfeet, and none of her kindred can love her as they do."

"But Miona is white and they are red; they are of different races and can not consort together."

"Love knows no race nor color" was the rather poetic expression of the dusky lover, who certainly did not intend that he should be argued out of the position he had assumed.

"Woo-wol-na promised that when five summers had come and gone, I should be sent to my people. Has Woo-wol-na two tongues?"

"Red Bear made no such promise," was the sullen reply of the Blackfoot.

"But he does the Queen a great wrong; she has spent many years with the Blackfeet; they have treated her kindly, and she loves them; but her heart is with her father and mother, who are waiting her coming."

"Let them come to the Queen," replied the trapper, "they shall be given the chief's lodge, they shall sleep upon the finest furs, and shall eat the fattest buffalo; they shall be welcome for all the moons they wish to stay, because they are the friends of the Blackfoot Queen."

Miona had no hope or thought of gaining a concession from her captor, but she was seeking merely to gain time. There was a faint stir of hope again when she found no other Indians near the fire. Surely Nick Whiffles and her lover must speedily miss her and institute a search, and she believed the sagacity of the trapper ought to be sufficient to direct him to the right spot.

The absence of the Blackfeet was as inexplicable as that of her friends. She knew that the wood was swarming with the dusky foes, and how it was that with the still remained away was certainly singular, to say the least.

She was not aware that this was only one of a number of fires, kindled here and there in the valley for the purpose of distracting the fugitives and preventing their escape over the ridge.

Red Bear showed the same deference toward her that had characterized him during the years past. He evidently regretted the outbreak of which he had been guilty at the deserted village, and which he was certain had hastened the flight of the girl, and caused the aversion with which she seemed to regard him.

Having recovered possession of her again, he was now anxious to undo this mischief and to restore himself to his original place in her esteem.

Both were standing near the fire; he had his arms folded, in the stoical, indifferent manner of the Indian warrior, while his swarthy face, and his dark eyes that scarcely ever wandered from hers, were lit up with an expression of undisguised admiration and love.

Surely no Indian had ever coveted maid as he coveted her; surely never had the earth seen such a flower bloom as she at his side; surely she was worth any sacrifice or danger that he could offer.

Miona stood with her blanket gathered about her, her long, dark, Indian-like tresses hanging over her shoulders, her face downcast, as she looked gloomily into the fire, answering his questions and making her remarks with the dreamy indifference of one who is unconscious of what she is saying.

But no one else was encountered, nor did she hear any indication of the proximity of her friends.

"Why do they remain away? Have they too deserted me?" she wailed, in her anguish. "Is there no hope for me?"

The heavens seemed closed, indeed, as the dim moonlight fell upon her captor, she glanced askance at him. In the obscurity he seemed ten times more hideous and repulsive than ever before.

She did not dare struggle or resist him.

She knew what a fearful temper he possessed, and she wondered at his forbearance, in the face of the struggle she had already made to flee from him.

Perhaps the exultation he felt in her capture compensated him for all the labor he had undergone in the pursuit.

Whither would he take her? Back to the camp, where his companions were awaiting his return?

She had scarcely asked herself this question, when he left the path, taking the side opposite to the one by which they had entered, and at that moment utter, hopeless, dead despair took possession of her.

Why struggle against fate? She was doomed to fall into his hands; the fond dreams that had cheered her for years were not to be realized; hope was all a mockery; there was no happiness for her; she was never to see that cherished mother again, nor the face of that father that had vanished as suddenly as he appeared before her.

"Lead on, Red Bear," she murmured, hardly knowing what she said.

The triumphant young chief needed no such admittance, for he strode through the wood so rapidly, dragging her behind him, that she could scarcely keep her feet.

She had no knowledge or thought of the direction she was pursuing, for it was nothing to her, and she did not seek to know. She only knew that she was the most wretched and suffering of mortals, and that the future was all a blank to her. The bright sky overhead held no moon or stars for her.

On, still on he led her, his grasp never relaxing, and stumbling forward, as though in the power of some horrid nightmare.

When it seemed to her that she had been dragged forward for a mile (although it was less than one-eighth of that distance), she saw that they were nearing a camp-fire. She concluded at once that it was the main one, around which most of the party were gathered, but was somewhat surprised upon reaching it to observe that no one else was near. They were still as much alone as though buried in the very depth of the forest.

Still the camp had been recently visited, for the fire was burning so brightly as to prove that it must have been replenished but a short time before. There was a heap of brush and fuel lying near, and gathering up an armful, Red Bear cast it upon the flames.

As they flared up they made the immediate circle in which they were standing as light as day.

Perhaps, in her distress, Leone's remarkable beauty was increased, for when the young chief turned his dark eyes upon her, there was no anger and nothing but love in his expression, and with something like sadness in his voice, he asked:

"Why did the Queen of the Woods flee from me?"

"She wished to go to her own home and kindred."

"Her home is with the Blackfeet, and none of her kindred can love her as they do."

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"Love knows no race nor color" was the rather poetic expression of the dusky lover

CHINESE LOVE SONG.

BY JOE JOT, JR.

My love she has the sweetest eyes
That ever yet was seen.
They are decidedly oblique,
And very large and green;
The paper of my Shanghai belle,
Is a Chinese Mandarin.

She moves with grace, her fairy feet
Make music as she goes,
And they are both as long—
My love can her nose;
Only two little inches long,
Including heels and toes.

Oh, love, you are as angel-like,
More other can I prize,
You must have lived your whole life long—
On dainty rats and mice,
And had for dessert nothing else,
But cat soup and pup pies.

How poor am I? I only live
On common rice and tea,
And half the time I can't get these,
Yet, oh, how rich I be;
They gentle smile far more sweet
Than birds' nest soup to me!

An Hour of Agony;

THE REJECTED LOVER'S VOW.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

"It can never be, Mr. Marden," and the lady's voice was firm, though low.

"Agnes, I can't take such an answer. It would kill me—it comes so unexpected," pleaded the man, with broken tones, as he turned again toward the fair speaker.

Agnes Cather was truly fair. Rather above the medium height, graceful and queenly in her carriage, with beautiful hair, jetty black, as were her brilliant eyes. She did not appear to be more than eighteen, at the most, although her form was so rarely matured and perfectly developed.

The man was young, of good figure, and with handsome features, but upon the latter dissipation and excesses had stamped their indelible mark. Rich, young, and of a convivial disposition, evil associates had initiated him into the mysteries of "fast life," which can be seen in its extreme in the "Mound City."

"It is all the answer I can give you, and it is not my fault that you are not prepared for it. You should know my reasons—at least the main ones—for changing as I have done, of late, in my manner toward you," added Agnes, arising.

"But what have I done—how have I offended you? There must be some mistake."

"I think not; but if you insist, I will tell you plainly, that there may be no misunderstanding; that you may know my reply is irrevocable."

"Tell me; I am innocent of any wrong," "I will, and pardon me if I wound your pride. There was a time when—I won't say I loved you—but when I respected and admired you. What has caused the change? Your own actions during the past year. You have degraded your natural talent and goodness of heart by drink. You have been so under the influence of liquor that you were senseless. You have been picked up in the streets and conducted home by policemen, when, had not, your wealth protected you, you would have awoke in the station-house. You have figured in more than one street fracas; you have gambled heavily, and have felt no shame in being seen with the most degraded and profligate beings.

"Do you wonder, then, that, seeing all this, my feelings toward you should change, or that, where once you were considered a very dear friend, you should be treated with cold politeness? Can you blame me for changing? No, the change is in yourself. If I ever felt a sentiment of love for you, it is all gone now," Agnes said, in low, calm tones, but with pale features.

"You are right, Miss Cather, and I can not blame you. But I did not think. One thing led me on to another until I could not tell where to stop. But I can change—I will change, if you will only give me one ray of hope to live on during the trial," pleaded Edward Marden.

"It can not be; I would be acting a falsehood, for I can never again look upon you as the friend I used to know."

"Think again, Agnes—only think what your words may drive me to," he resumed, in agitated tones. "With the hope of finally winning you to be my wife, I could accomplish any thing. But if you discard me now, where will it end? I can tell you. My dearest hope crushed, I would go to the bad. I have not gone far in the path now, and I can turn back if I have your hand to lead me. If you refuse it, I can not—I will not—try to reform. Agnes, my future rests with you!"

"Mr. Marden, this is worse than useless. How can I trust you if you can not trust yourself? If the self-respect of a man's own heart does not save him, that of another surely will avail nothing. And then, when a young man acts as you have done, what is to be expected of him when he grows older and more hardened? Who could trust him? But enough. You have my answer, and I repeat it. I will never marry you, and all further argument is useless."

"You mean this?"

"I do."

"Then upon your head rests my ruin! I will plunge into excesses and go downward as fast as I can. But mark my words; if you do not marry me, no other man shall call you wife while I live. If I swing for it, I'll kill him like a dog!"

"Enough, sir; will you go now, or must I call the servants to eject you?" exclaimed Agnes, her cheek flushed and eyes flashing, as her slippers foot stamped the floor.

"I will go—obedient to the last. But remember my vow," sneeringly added Edward Marden, as he left the room.

Three years passed on, and many were the changes wrought in the lives of the two persons introduced to the reader.

Edward Marden had but too well kept his threat of going to the bad as fast as he could. From being an occasional drinker, he became a confirmed sot and gambler. His name figured often and largely in the police reports. And at last, in a quarrel over the gambling-table, he committed murder. To escape the consequences he fled the city, and gradually became forgotten by nearly all those who had known him.

Agnes Cather formed the acquaintance of a rising young merchant, who finally induced her to become Mrs. Walter Lawton. Shortly after this they removed to St. Joseph, Missouri, and settled down in comfortable circumstances, Lawton following his occupation.

The threats of the rejected suitor had long

since been forgotten, and Agnes was as happy as the day was long. But the bitter vow of Edward Marden was soon to be recalled to her memory in a fearful manner.

One pleasant evening, soon after Walter had left for the store, a loud and tempestuous ring sounded at the door. The one servant girl had been given leave to spend the night at home, and Agnes was alone, save the little boy sleeping soundly up-stairs. Without a thought of danger, Agnes answered the bell. As she opened the door, a roughly-attired man pushed her back, and entering, adroitly closed the door behind him. She stood astounded at this sudden action, and ere she could speak, the intruder drew a revolver, and cocking it, thrust the cold muzzle against her breast.

"Don't you cry out; if you speak a word above a whisper, by all that's holy, I'll send a bullet through your heart!" and a harsh, discordant chuckle gurgled out from beneath the bristling mass of coarse hair.

Agnes did not speak; the sudden action had completely bewildered her.

"See here, my ducky, I want to give you a bit of advice. I am here on business, and won't bear any trifling. If you act all right, you'll not be hurt, for I have other game. But mind; at the first sign of attempting to spoil my plans, I swear I'll blow your brains out. Now lead the way to the room you were in," and still holding the pistol in readiness, the ruffian followed Agnes into the library, where she had just been sitting, the door of which he closed. Then he drew a cavalry carbine from under his coat.

Standing the gun up in one corner, the man sunk down in an easy-chair, with a grant of self-complacent gratification.

"Now, Miss Aggy, old girl, take a seat and listen to me. That's right; don't stand on ceremony with old friends. Now, take a good look at me; don't you recognize your old lover? You don't? then I'm Ned Marden. Now, do you know me?"

Agnes uttered a faint gasp of terror. The long-forgotten threat came up before her with startling vividness. The rough-looking brute before her appeared bad enough to make his words good, and his actions sure fully confirmed the thought.

It seemed difficult to find any resemblance in this being to the polished, refined Edward Marden of past days. He had grown stouter, his face bloated and pimply, of a bold fiery red, so far as could be told through the covering of dirt and grease. His eyes were bleared and watery, and the razor evidently had not touched his face for

from its very smoothness. The first bottle was at length emptied and dropped upon the floor, and the ruffian, now beginning to be affected by his potations, opened a second.

Agnes was fearful lest his head should resist his fumes until the return of her husband. It was now half-past eight, and he returned home punctually at nine. But for the thought of the helpless little one upstairs, she would have risked all in one struggle for freedom. Marden did not watch her closely now, for the heavy drapery were beginning to tell their tale, and Agnes believed she could gain the street before he could seize her.

The minutes rapidly rolled on, and still he retained his seat, but with fast-increasing difficulty. Once, in reaching over for the cigar, he fell upon the table, crushing the candle almost out, but then he recovered with an oath, and swilled another glassfull.

"Shay, ol' gal, w'y don't' fler come?" He finally hiccupped. "I'm cu's sleepy. Goo' min' take nap—ll you wake me when 'e comes?"

"Yes, I will," Agnes managed to utter, in a tone whose calmness surprised her.

The clock struck nine. Her husband might come at any moment.

Marden tried to start up, but the chair-leg caught in the carpet, and he fell at full length. Then, after vainly essaying to arise, he rolled over and placed his head upon the chair-back. Agnes almost feared to breathe lest he should arouse, and sat on through the most agonizing minutes she ever experienced.

Then there came an explosive snort from the drunken brute, followed by a steady, rumbling snore. He was asleep.

Agnes cautiously arose and approached him. The revolvers in his belt were fully exposed, and carefully drawing them forth, she grasped the gun, and passed lightly out of the room. At the same instant she heard a well-known footstep at the hall-door, and with a glad cry, she rushed forward, and with a glad cry, she rushed forward, and was clasped in her husband's arms.

"What is the matter, Aggy?" cried Walter, in wondering alarm. "What does this gun and pistols mean?"

"That man—is there—kill you," she gasped and then sunk fainting upon his shoulder.

Gently lowering her to the floor, Lawton grasped one of the pistols and sprung toward the other door of the library. One glance at the desperado showed him that



months. His dress was of coarse jeans, and raw-hide brogans covered his feet.

"And now that you do know me, why let's talk on business. Mayhap you've forgotten the words I spoke some time ago; so I'll just refresh your memory. I said that no man should call you wife while I lived—that I would kill him like a dog. I expect you thought it was only an empty threat, when so long a time went by without my keeping my word; but it wasn't."

"Several things—no need to be particular—kept me away until a few days ago, when I came here. I went to the theater last night, and as luck would have it, I saw you. Then it was easy to guess that the fellow with you was your husband. Well, I followed you home, and then watched my chance. I saw the girl leave, and then your husband, and so I thought I would drop in and make you a call, before proceeding to make my word good."

"Well, I'm going to stay here until your husband comes. As he enters that door I'll put a half-ounce ball through him, and then leave. Luckily for me they don't pay much attention to a fellow's shooting or carrying weapons here. Do you understand? You witnessed my vow, and it's only right that you should witness its fulfillment," and Marden laughed again, a hideous chuckle, that caused Agnes to shudder, not with dread for herself, but for her husband.

"Now, ducky, why don't you do the polite? I've not eaten a bite since morning, and I am as hungry as a wolf. So stir your stumps and get me something to eat. Hold on," he added, as a gleam of hope shot across Agnes' face, "and I'll go with you; you can't fool me that way!"

Agnes led the way to the pantry, lighted by the ruffian, where he speedily satisfied his hunger. Then he demanded liquor, and fearing to anger him, Agnes produced several bottles of fine old cognac, for Walter was not a strict teetotaler. These Marden placed upon the little table in the library, together with a box of choice Havanas, and drew a chair beside the table, with a grunt of satisfaction.

"Haul up a chair, old girl, and keep me company. You need not drink nor smoke if you don't want to, but it looks more sociable, and I want to keep my eye upon you. Puff!" he exclaimed, as he tossed off a goblet-full of the oily, subtle liquor. "That tastes well enough, but it is too weak."

A second glassfull went the way of the first, and a ray of hope sprung up in the heart of Agnes, who knew that the brandy was above proof, and the more powerful

there was nothing to be dreaded from him, at least for the present, and then he returned to his wife, and then briefly related the events of the evening, while Lawton securely bound the drunken brute.

A policeman was summoned, and Ned Marden conveyed to the police station. When it became known who he was, notice was sent to the authorities at St. Louis, and Marden was tried there on charge of the murder for which he had fled the city, and some months afterward he suffered the death penalty.

But it was long ere Agnes fully recovered from the effects of the trial she had undergone during this "Hour of Agony."

How Kit Carson Saved my Scalp.

BY "BRUIN" ADAMS.

THE tomahawk is peculiarly the red-man's weapon, and in the use of it he becomes skilled to a degree that those who have never seen the deadly weapon in his hands can scarcely realize.

A great many mountain men, trappers and hunters have appropriated it, but not depending upon it as the Indian does for attack or defense, they scarcely ever become even ordinarily apt in casting it.

Indeed I have never seen but one white man who had perfected himself in handling the tomahawk, and that was the celebrated scout, guide and Indian-fighter, Kit Carson, in whose hands it truly became a weapon of death.

It is owing to this fact that my bones are not to-day bleaching amid the snow of the Sierras.

I had been out during the day after game, having left the camp early in the morning, and was returning for the horse to bring in a fine, fat sheep I had killed, when in crossing a deep valley, I struck a fresh Indian trail, mounted, and among the numerous tracks discovered the imprint of a shod hoof.

I knew at once that no Indian's horse had left that trail, and desiring to see "what was up" I immediately turned from my former course, and followed it down the valley, whither it led.

The tracks were fresh, and I knew that I would soon come up with the party, who would probably go into camp at the first convenient place.

It is owing to this fact that my bones are not to-day bleaching amid the snow of the Sierras.

I had been out during the day after game,

and around the huge boulders and occasional clumps of timber, with which the valley abounded, and hence I was compelled to move slowly and with great caution to avoid running upon the camp unexpectedly.

While intently scanning the track and surroundings, having halted under the shadow of a huge rock for that purpose, I was suddenly aroused to the fact that I was not alone by hearing a slight cough directly behind me.

I wheeled, with my rifle half-way up, and discovered the form of a man, clad in the rough garb of a hunter, standing a little way off, leaning upon his rifle, and regarding me with an amused smile.

"Pardon me for so abruptly interrupting your meditations," he said, courteously, at the same time advancing and extending his hand.

There was something about the man that struck me forcibly; something in the quiet determination of the face, the light of his eyes, the evident strength and agility that lay in the slight, graceful limbs.

"I see," he continued, "that we are bent on the same mission, or at any rate, in the same direction. You are following this trail, I think?"

I told him that I was, that I had seen a shod hoof among the other tracks, and wished to see why it was there.

"It is the track of my horse, a favorite, that these rascals have stolen, and I have been following them for thirty miles. I must have my horse, for he is one that can not well be replaced."

I hastened to assure him that I was entirely at his service, and then, without further talk, we again took the trail, and in half an hour sighted the Indians' camp-fire.

A few minutes' scrutiny revealed that the party numbered nine warriors, that they were Mountain Apaches, and were busily engaged in getting ready their evening meal.

It is not usual for me to allow other men, especially strangers, to lay down the plan of action, in other words, to cut out my work for me, but in this case it seemed perfectly natural that I should do so. I asked no questions, nor did I suggest any thing. I just did as he directed, much to my own surprise.

Our plan was simple. We both carried a rifle and a six-shooter. We would get in close range, open fire, and then act according to circumstances.

Of course the first two, those whom the rifles covered, fell in their tracks, and then,

We recovered his horse, and half a dozen others, and then, well satisfied with the result, took the back trail for camp.

Beat Time's Notes.

THE last box of cigars which I bought deserves more than a passing notice. The first one that I lit wouldn't smoke, it was so mean. It wouldn't even smoke when I threw it in the stove. The second smoked too good, considering the quality of the smoke, which was a cross between the aromatic odors of a burning shock of fodder and a burning paper mill. The next would n't draw; I drew two teeth in trying to make it, and then had to bore a hole through it with a gimlet. The next completely concaved my cheeks in, so that they never will get convexed again. In trying to smoke the next I injured my backbone and dislocated my neck completely. The next I tried to smoke went out of the window, while I went out of the door. In smoking the next I lost five pounds in flesh. Then I had twenty minutes for dinner. The next wouldn't smoke at all, though I lit it at both ends and put a mustard poultice in the middle. The next gave me a cramp in the leg. The next one I sucked in; but the next one raised my wife, who floored me with a boot-jack, and the balance of the box went for use as kitchen fuel—that is, as many of them would burn. It is a mullen-cholly fact that those cigars were made out of the best mullen that could be got.

My neighbor's dog is my sworn enemy, and from the manner in which he barks all night long under my window, I infer that I am his enemy. His master and I are on purely neighbor-terms; that is, he loves me no worse than I love him, but he has a satisfactory advantage over me in the shape of that dog, which he has taken great pains to cultivate for the express purpose of making it interesting for me. He is a good sleeper, slightly deaf, and of course he is not disturbed; but I am a poor sleeper at best, and when I do forget my sins and my debts, and, too often, my prayers, and get into the first light, flighty spell of sleep, it is broken into pieces by one blast of that dog. I have gotten up at such times and have thrown every available piece of portable property in my room at him. I have exhausted my stove-legs; my cabinet of geology has been reduced; my library of Patent Office Reports has even been sacrificed to wreath that dog's bark, but it has weathered the storm. Still I have one consolation: the bigger the bark grows, the dog is correspondingly reduced, and if I don't go up with loss of sleep in a few years, I am convinced there will not be enough left of the dog to make the smallest bark.